

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

C O P Y

JUN 30 1961

TO : EUR - Mr. Kohler
FROM : INR - Roger Hilsman
SUBJECT : The Berlin Crisis: In What Sense a Test of Will?

There is one point which has been implicit in much of what INR has written on the Berlin crisis which I believe is worth raising in and of itself. It concerns the sense in which the Soviets visualize the Berlin crisis as a test of will.

Since the Vienna meeting Khrushchev has been attempting to give the impression that he is determined if necessary to sign a separate peace treaty, is prepared to face the consequences of this and cannot be deterred from his determination. In so doing he clearly hopes to force the West through fear of the dangers of a possible subsequent direct confrontation into a negotiated solution on Berlin acceptable to him. In this sense his approach does represent a testing of our will.

To visualize, however, that Khrushchev's object is actually to bring about the direct confrontation with which he is threatening us and thereby to stage a dramatic demonstration of his power to prevail over the West would, we believe, be a mistake. What he is seeking is a solution to his liking of the Berlin problem and the two Germanies issue. If in this process he weakens Western resolve, produces Allied disunity, etc., this would be a welcome by-product from his point of view. The dramatic showdown in which this kind of demonstration could most effectively be obtained is precisely the kind of situation which he is trying to keep from arising in his effort to induce the West to accept a negotiated solution to his liking.

If we reached the stage in the Berlin crisis where Khrushchev had no alternative to facing a showdown, other than obviously backing down, he might or might not face the confrontation depending on his

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estimate of the dangers involved. To produce such a showdown is not, however, his objective.

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